

Emilie Knight
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LD 1837

Testimony of Emilie Knight in support of LD 1837: An Act to Increase Oral Health Services

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Emilie Knight. I live in southern Somerset County and I do program management consulting work for Maine nonprofit organizations, one of which is the Children's Oral Health Network. My work with the Network focuses on supporting partners throughout the state in the implementation of the Virtual Dental Home model, an innovative approach to bringing comprehensive oral health care to facilities where people spend their days - childcare, schools, community centers, and beyond. I'm testifying today in support of LD 1837.

While our state has a network of dedicated and skilled dental professionals, it is well documented that the current workforce is not adequate to meet the needs of all Maine people. LD 1837 tackles two key aspects of what it will take to remedy issues surrounding equitable access to oral health care in Maine:

- 1) Bolstering support of school-based services keeps kids' teeth healthy in the community, catching issues early and providing more consistent preventive care. This, in turn, reduces the burden on dental offices of both routine preventive care as well as helps to reduce intensive restorative care needs over time.
- 2) Investing in a data-driven understanding and approach to developing Maine's oral health care infrastructure will allow the state and all partners, such as the Network, to focus on efforts that will truly change lives because oral health is overall health.

My work with the Virtual Dental Home initiative has introduced me to the passion and wisdom of so many dental health and public health professionals dedicating their lives to helping Maine improve oral health outcomes for all residents. LD 1837 is a foundational investment in this critical system's change work.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony on this important issue.